

Freedom

by random103

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Summary: Lucy Heartfilia has been trapped inside a tiny house for her whole life. Her only visitor is the mysterious Natsu Dragneel. With Natsu's help, will Lucy ever gain her freedom, or will she remain locked away? - NaLu, AU.

1. Chapter 1

Hello, readers! I know that I still have to finish 'Let Me In', but there's no harm in posting other stories, is there? I hope you like it! (The rating might change as the story progresses, but for now it's K+).

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><p>Lucy Heartfilia sat beside her window, looking at the outside world. How exciting it would be, to know that you were free and able to go wherever you wished? Having been trapped in a tiny house on a mountain all her life, her books, and imagination, were her only solace.<p>

She heard the door creak, and stood up. It had to be him. Her heartbeat sped up.

"Hey, Luce!" Bright pink hair peeked through the doorframe.

"H-Hi, Natsu! You're early." She said softly, trying to calm her heart. She waited as he walked in, smiling, as always. Apart from her books, he was her only link to the outside world, and her best friend.

"Yeah, well, I don't want you gettin' lonely." He grinned at her. She smiled back, hoping he wouldn't notice her blush.

"Do you want something to eat?"

"That'd be great; thanks!"

Could you have a best friend if he was the only person you had ever met?

She busied herself making food for him, while internally panicking over her appearance. Her blonde hair was tangled, she was dressed in a baggy shirt and shorts, and she-

"You look great, as always." His voice was soft.

She looked at him, startled. Was he a mind reader?

"Thanks, I guess?" She smiled, bringing over a plate of sandwiches to her small dining table. She watched in fascination as he devoured all of them.

"Does everybody in the outside eat like this?" She inquired. He paused, looking up.

"Oh, no. It's just that you cook so well, I can't help myself."

"O-Oh."

They sat in silence for a while, before she worked up the courage to ask him a question. She asked it every time he came, and he always gave the same answer.

"Um, when will I be able to go outside?" She asked, hoping against hope that he'd give a different answer.

"I don't know yet. I'm sorry, Lucy." There was genuine pain in his oynx eyes. She blinked away tears, not wanting to appear weak. It was always the same thing. Never any way of knowing when she'd be able to get out, no hope.

"It's alright. It's just that...that I've been in this house for seventeen years already. Will I live my whole life imprisoned in here?" Despite herself, she felt tears running down her cheeks. He stiffened, and moved to sit next to her. He put his arms around her, and she sunk gratefully into his embrace.

"Luce...I will get you out of here. I promise." He looked straight at her, and she nodded while running her sleeves across her face.

"T-Thank you, Natsu. Sorry for being such a crybaby."

"You're not a crybaby, Luce. In fact, you're one of the bravest people I have ever met." She felt a smile tugging at the corners of her lips.

"You always know how to make me feel better, don't you." She said, now laughing.

"It's a talent of mine." He chuckled.

"Do you want to read my draft? I started a new story." She offered bashfully. He nodded eagerly. She walked over to her desk, where a sheaf of paper lay. Picking it up, she handed it to him. He began reading it.

"Um, Natsu?" She said, curious about something.

"Yeah? This story is great, by the way."

"Thank you. I was just wondering; what's the outside world like? Is it all mountains and valleys?" She questioned innocently. He sighed, running a hand through his pink hair.

"Well, it's hard to describe, but I'll try." She leaned forward, interested. "There are cities, with tall buildings called skyscrapers. They're like mountains, but made of metal and glass. And the streets are always really busy, with people, and cars."

"Cars? You mean like those box things with wheels?" Lucy asked. She felt excited about the outside, yet intimidated as well.

"Yeah. They come in different shapes and sizes. It's really noisy, but it is also very fun. And when you exit the cities, you go into the suburbs. The suburb's are quieter, and they have more house like this one. You have schools, where children go to learn, and offices where people go to work and earn money. It's not all mountains; you have oceans, deserts, plains, rivers, and other things."

"I wish I could go." Lucy sighed to herself. Skyscrapers, cars, offices, schools. The ocean was a special dream of hers. A ...it all sounded like a dream. How could she, a girl on a remote mountain who'd never even stepped outside her backyard, experience all these things?

"Don't worry, Lucy. Someday, you will go into the cities, and everywhere else. I promise."

"You are psychic! How'd you know I was thinking that?" She exclaimed.

"You're really easy to read." He smirked.

"Hey, Luce? Is that fence still functioning?" He asked. She nodded sadly. When she was young, she had tried to escape. They (she still didn't know who took care of her when she was young) had caught her, but as an added precaution, a 24/7 electric fence had been installed around her house. She couldn't go out, no matter how badly she wanted to. All she knew was that it was some kind of experiment, and Natsu was the only one who was allowed to talk to her.

"Luce, I've got to go, sorry." He guiltily said, looking at his watch.

"Oh, okay! B-Bye, Natsu." She said, feeling sadness drill a hole in her heart.

"I'll see you in two weeks?" He asked. She nodded and tried to smile.

She watched him go, a small dot on the horizon, getting smaller and

smaller.

When will I finally be free?

* * *

><p>"Hey, flame-brain? Where were you?!" Gray Fullbuster, a member of the organization Fairy Tail, and sworn frenemy of Natsu Dragneel demanded.<p>

"None of your business, stripper. And put a shirt on!" Natsu said shortly. Gray looked down in surprise.

"Not again!" He said in exasperation. Taking advantage of Gray's distracted state, Natsu slipped away.

"Oy, come back, ash head!"

"Why should I listen to you, snowman?" Natsu retorted. As they both began punching each other, a shadow loomed over the two.

"Are you two fighting?" Erza Scarlet asked. The two gulped, and threw their arms around each other hurriedly.

"O-Of course not, ma'am! Why would we fight? We're good friends!" Gray said.

"What he said!" Natsu replied.

"Hm. Natsu, where were you? You didn't come to the guild this morning." The Fairy Tail Guild was a detective agency, which offered trained agents to investigate crimes throughout Magnolia, and, in fact, Fiore.

"Yeah, I had something to do." Natsu said awkwardly, and it was clear he wasn't going to say anything more.

"Anyways, there is a job on the request board for 1 million jewels. I thought you two, Wendy, and I could take it." She handed the paper to Natsu. Gray read it over his shoulder.

"Uh, Erza?"

"Yes?"

"This is a request to sample cake!" They both yelled at the same time.

"Yes! Think about it! Getting paid to eat all that cake..." She had stars in her eyes. They sighed. What could they do?

"I already asked Wendy. Begin packing at once! Natsu, are you going to take Happy this time?"

"Course! He's a part of the team!" Natsu's cat, Happy, usually came on jobs with him. For reasons nobody could fathom, he treated it like a sentient person who could talk. They just accepted it as one of his quirks.

Even though Natsu talked and joked with the guild, as usual, a

certain blonde was still on his mind.

When will she finally be free?

* * *

><p>How is it? Good, bad, horrible? Please review and give me feedback! I'll probably make this a multi-chapter story, so please review so future chapters are better. Hope you enjoyed it. =)<p>

- random103

2. Chapter 2

Hi! I hope you enjoy this chapter of 'Freedom'. Review and tell me what you think. :D

* * *

><p>"Ugh..." Natsu's face resembled a bud in the process of blooming. He was hunched over in his seat, almost about to throw up. "I..hate trains.." He made some extremely disgusting retching noises.

"That's revolting!" Gray made a big show of holding his nose.

"For heaven's sake, Natsu. Pull yourself together! We haven't even been on the train for five minutes." Erza told him sternly. She would have knocked him unconscious, but she was carrying a box of pastries (gifts from the client) in her hands and didn't want to risk squashing them.

"Wendy..D-Didn't you carry those Troia pills with you? They were so-" He broke off, putting a hand on his stomach. Wendy grimaced apologetically.

"I'm so sorry, Natsu-san! I would give them to you, but I left them at home! I'm really sorry!" Wendy was feeling terribly guilty. She didn't know what to do. She glanced at her white cat, Carla, who was sitting contentedly in her lap. Wendy had a feeling Carla was telling her to stop being so apologetic.

"Pathetic, fire-loser. Can't ya even handle a train ride?" Gray smirked at Natsu, who was feeling too sick to reply.

The train slowed down, and Magnolia station came into view. Even before the train came to a complete stop, Natsu jumped out of the vehicle.

"Um, sir, that's dangerous-" The bemused people on the station were ignored by Natsu, who promptly regained his composure and was letting Happy off the train.

"Natsu, stop making a scene!" Erza barked at him, and he cowered in fear, nodding. Gray got off, followed by Wendy, who was carrying Carla.

"Well, since - for once - Natsu caused no trouble, we got the full reward. Dividing one million jewels four ways, that means each of us

gets - wait a second," Erza did the math "250,000 jewels!"

"Hey, what about Happy?" Natsu interjected.

"He shares from your part. Problem?" she glowered at him. He shook his head sheepishly.

"Well, I'm starved! Anyone wanna come grab a bite with me?" Natsu asked cheerfully.

"Er, Natsu-san? You ate about fifty of those cinnamon rolls back at the bakery. How can you still be hungry?" Wendy asked confusedly.

"Well, that's the million-dollar question, isn't it, Wendy?" Gray said before Natsu got a chance to reply. "Why is Natsu such a moron? I doubt we'll ever know."

"What was that, ice-freak?"

"You heard me, flame-dork!"

"Stop your nonsensical squabbling now!"

"Yessir! I mean, yes ma'am!"

They continued with similar banter until they reached the guild (with Erza stopping to unload all her stuff along the way). Gray and Natsu continued to insult each other until Erza stepped in, and Wendy told Mirajane all about the job. The guild was notably quieter than usual since many jobs had come up. Still, there were enough people left to cause a ruckus.

"Alrighty, then! I've got something I need to do, so goodbye!" Natsu abruptly ended the conversation and left the guild hall, taking Happy with him. He didn't even stop to say goodbye or grab some last bits of food.

"He's been acting strange, lately. Wonder what's up with him?" Gray commented.

"Gray-sama is so caring! He is such a wonderful comrade!" Out of nowhere, Juvia popped up with hearts in her eyes. (Everyone ignored her.)

"That's true, though. He hardly goes out apart from jobs anymore." Erza said.

"Think he got himself a girlfriend?" Cana smirked from behind her barrel of alcohol.

"Natsu? Nah. No way that idiot would ever get a girl to go out with him." Gray scoffed. Still, they all wondered why he had been acting so strangely lately.

* * *

><p>"Say, Happy, what d'you think I should get Lucy? Her birthday is coming up soon, and I wanna get her something nice." Natsu chatted idly with Happy. The blue-coloured cat meowed in reply while eating a

fish. Where he got the fish from, Natsu didn't know.<p>

"Good point, though, little buddy. I should get her something meaningful, not just an empty trinket." He had no idea why this girl was so special to him, just that he hated seeing her upset.

His eyes fell on an advertisement for a newly-opened store. He grinned. "That's perfect!"

Standing up, he grabbed Happy (the cat went everywhere with him) and ran out in a hurry. It was cloudy, but didn't look like it was going to rain, so he didn't even bother with a coat.

After bargaining for what seemed like ages, he finally found one that satisfied him. Paying to the storekeeper, he exited the shop with a huge smile on his face. He carried Happy in one hand, and his prize in the other.

"Puun puun?" The small white dog stared up at him. It had a pointy orange nose, wide black eyes, and was quite possibly the most adorable creature in existence.

"This is a Nikora breed dog. Apparently they're really good pets but aren't much good at anything else. They don't need much care and need very little exercise. What do you think, Happy? Lucy's gonna love him." Natsu smiled, feeling extremely proud of himself. He walked happily all the way home, occasionally making 'conversation' with Happy and/or the dog (whom Natsu had decided to let Lucy name).

Closing his door behind him, he put both of them down. Happy scampered towards his 'spot' and settled down contentedly. The dog remained where it was, not seeming hungry or tired. It just let out noises that vaguely resembled barks sometimes.

He sat down and checked all his mail. He mostly got e-mail (who sent real letters nowadays?), but today, there was a letter waiting for him in his mailbox. Staring at the old-fashioned wax seal, his heart quickened. Tearing it open, he hurriedly read it. He gazed at it in disbelief.

Hurrying to make himself presentable, he rushed out the door, completely forgetting about Happy and the Nikora dog.

"They can't do this to her." He growled under his breath, and then he left.

_Dear Mr. Dragneel, _

We would like to thank you for performing your given task of taking care of Lucy Heartfilia for the past seven years. The experiment has reached a conclusion, and we have also reached a decision. The entire Council has decided that she is a potential threat to the balance that the Council has reached. They have voted, and they have decided that she is too dangerous to be allowed to live free. Though you have taken admirable care of her, we feel the time has come to move her to a laboratory, where the full extent of her powers will be tested.

_If she cooperates, she has nothing to fear. The entire Council was

unanimous in this decision; Lucy Heartfilia is to serve as a guinea pig._

_We are asking you to guide her out of her current location, to the chosen laboratory. If she doesn't come willing, you have permission to use force as is necess__ary. Once she arrives, she will be further experimented upon. If she is unable to cope with the circumstances, then the only humane thing to do would be to end her life. If push comes to shove, we hope you will perform the deed._

She must be moved to the enclosed location within one month.

_Sincerely,
>Balam Alliance Enterprises

"'Nothing to fear', my ass." He swore under his breath. Natsu had infiltrated the Balam Alliance seven years ago as an undercover agent, in hopes of gathering information. Contrary to what people thought, he was actually a very good spy, able to gain prominence within the company relatively quickly, even though he was only eleven at the time. There were three main companies in the Balam Alliance Enterprises; the OraciÃ³n Seis, Grimoire Heart, and Tartaros. He hated all of them with a passion but had quickly learned of their most well-kept secret: Lucy.

Now they wanted to take her away from him. No way in hell was he going to let that happen. Ever.

No one would harm Lucy while he was still alive.

* * *

><p>Sorry there isn't any Natsu-Lucy interaction in here, but I didn't know how to fit that in. I hope that I didn't reveal too much stuff right off the bat, I tend to do that (sorry if I did)! Please, review and tell me what you think! =><p>

- random103

3. Chapter 3

Hello, everyone! I hope you enjoyed the previous chapters, and hopefully you'll like this chapter as well. Please, review, so I can improve my writing :)

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* * *

><p>"Gramps!" Natsu demanded, storming into the guild. He ignored everyone's calls. Even Gray's shouts of "Oi, flame-brain!" did nothing to sway him. He walked straight towards the guild's head, Makarov Dreyar. Everyone called him 'Master' Makarov, or, in Natsu's case, Gramps.<p>

"Yes, Natsu? What is it?" The old man asked from his perch atop the counter. Before Natsu said anything, the old man's face

paled.

"Don't tell me you destroyed property again! I got billed over 100,000 jewels for the last place you wrecked! If you did it again-"

"I didn't destroy anything." Natsu interrupted him. "It's about something else." He gazed said pointedly, causing Makarov to nod meaningfully. The man jumped down and walked towards his private office, with Natsu following him. The rest of the guild looked on in bemusement, wondering what could possibly have happened to make Natsu, as well as the master, ignore them all.

Inside the guild master's office, Natsu wordlessly held out the letter he had gotten. Makarov took it and read it. As he reached the end, wrinkles appeared on his brow. Giving the letter back to Natsu's hands, he sighed and sat down on his chair (which had had to be made extra-tall for him).

"Did you do anything suspicious?" He asked. Natsu shook his head.

"I acted normally. I kept procrastinating on how to move her, so I could get time to think, but it seems they've finally had enough." His voice betrayed all the panic he was feeling.

"Well, first, we need to inform the Council so they can make a decision."

"Decision?! Lucy's life is in danger and they want to deliberate? That's crap!" Natsu said heatedly. The other man held his hand up.

"Of course, no matter what they decide, we're going to rescue her anyways." He said, cracking a small smile.

"What about Doranbolt?" Natsu questioned. Doranbolt was an ally of the Council, who had been assigned to help Fairy Tail infiltrate the Balam Alliance. He was a cross between a partner and an informant. This was a top secret mission; nobody else in the guild knew about it.

"We'll have to tell him as well. For now, act like everything is fine when you go see Lucy, but just find a way to tell her the truth. Mention nothing about getting her out, though."

"Alright. Meanwhile, I'll try to find out what the Alliance intends to do with Lucy." Natsu said determinedly. The master expressed agreement, and he left the office.

Gray and Erza talked in the guild hall. They had considered eavesdropping on the conversation but decided that the risks of being caught outweighed the knowledge they would gain from listening in.

"What do you think they're talking about?" Gray asked.

"I don't know. I've rarely seen Natsu so serious, though." Erza said solemnly.

"Do you think...that it's about Igneel?" Gray queried. Natsu's foster

father was rarely mentioned. Apparently, Igneel had found Natsu as a baby, and had raised him like his own son. However, one day, he just mysteriously disappeared, without leaving behind a trace of himself. Natsu had then wandered around the country, looking for Igneel, until he reached Fairy Tail, where the guild took him in, and cared for him. Natsu was always searching for Igneel, but guild members rarely mentioned him out of respect.

"It could be. However, Natsu looked angrier, rather than anything else. It was probably bad news, whatever it was." Erza replied. They both lapsed into a thoughtful silence.

Natsu soon emerged from the room. They both went over to him, asking about it.

"It was nothing, guys. Listen, Happy and I are all outta food money, so we should probably take another job. The 250,000 jewels from the last mission were all spent on fish for Happy, damn cat!" He said hurriedly. They raised their eyebrows at his not-so-subtle change of subject.

"F-Fine. There's a request asking for four people to help guard a bank. The reward's pretty big. Whaddaya say, ass-flame?" Gray asked.

"Sure, I - Wait, what did you say, ice princess?!" Natsu asked angrily. They both internally sighed; he was still as hotheaded as ever. However, it was clear something was bothering him. But what?

* * *

><p>Lucy scrunched up her face in concentration, trying to think of a suitable plot twist. Using an old pen she had dredged up from somewhere, she finished writing the last line in her newest chapter. Capping the pen with a flourish, she sat back.<p>

After Natsu had left, she had been bored out of her mind. She had used an old 'thing' she had begged from Natsu to read stuff for a while, but staring at the tiny screen for long periods of time made her head ache. It was practically useless for anything else, though. She had finally put it away and stopped procrastinating, and began writing her story.

It was about a teenage girl like her, named Elie. Elie was an almost-ordinary girl, but she lived in the magical kingdom of Fiore, where there were wizarding guilds who had mages who used magic. She went on adventures with her friends and did whatever she wanted. She had used Natsu's descriptions to create her dream world. Her protagonist was confident, powerful, and, most importantly, free.

"Now, if only I could find a way to get out of this prison, I'd be happier than ever." She sighed. She'd have to wait two whole weeks for Natsu to visit her again. Two weeks before she got to talk to another person. It seemed like an eternity.

She stood up and stretched out her body, feeling her muscles loosen. Moving to the tiny yard behind her house, she savoured the fresh air.

She had tried putting up red flags and messages from above the electric fence, in the hopes a traveller would see them and come to investigate. So far, however, it had been a fruitless effort.

She couldn't keep her mind from wandering into dangerous territory. Her memories of her childhood were so fuzzy as to be nonexistent, but she still analysed them carefully. Scrutinizing them for any detail, she was always disappointed. It was somewhere along her past, she had decided that she didn't _want_ to remember, and had sealed all her memories away.

What could be so horrible that her own mind wouldn't cooperate with her?

Shaking her head, she started running. It was a tiny space, but she needed to stay healthy, so she exercised nonetheless. After running ten laps (it really was a small space), she stopped to regain her breath. Determined not to let her mind digress, she ran faster, focusing on nothing but the path directly in front of her.

She would wait however long it took to be free, because she couldn't bear to think anything else.

* * *

><p>Sorry that there isn't much plot development in this chapter (or any Natsu-Lucy interaction), but I'm still figuring out how to pace this story. Thanks for reading, and please, review! Even a couple words can motivate me. ^_^<p>

- random103

End
file.